

POISON IVY CAN BE ANYWHERE

Garlyn O. Hoffman

Extension Range Brush and Weed Control Specialist
The Texas A&M University System

2-12-74
BT
20m

Spring brings poison ivy problems to many people. Some are more sensitive to exposure than others, and no one is ever fully immune. The first symptoms of itching and burning may develop within a few hours after exposure to the plant, or they may require 5 days or more.

Poison ivy grows throughout Texas, particularly along streams and in moist, shady places. The greatest danger from poisoning is in the spring and summer, even though it can occur in fall and winter.

Although parts of the poison ivy plant are toxic, the effects from the sap are particularly noticeable. Even small amounts of the plant's toxic agent (called "urushiol") can cause skin inflammation. The toxin is easily transferred from one object to another and by pets that have run through poison ivy plants. Smoke from burning poison ivy plants also will carry the toxin and can cause serious inflammation.

Poison Ivy Is Identifiable

Poison ivy, which is a perennial, native plant that grows during the warm season, belongs to the sumac genus of the cashew family. Three varieties of poison ivy, *Rhus toxicodendron* var., and one variety of poison sumac, *R. vernix*, grow in Texas.

The most widespread variety is the common poison ivy having glossy green leaves with smooth margins. The other varieties have lobed or toothed leaf margins which resemble oak leaves, and thus the name "poison oak." Poison ivy growth can be a vine, a shrub or a small tree. Since the leaves of poison ivy are always divided into three leaflets, it is useful to remember the old saying "Leaflets three, let it be."

The oakleaf poison ivy is likely to be lower growing than the smooth-leaved variety. Clusters of inconspicuous white flowers rise from the axis of the leaves of poison ivy. When fruits develop,

the berries are white and waxy, with distinct lines marking the outer surface which resemble segments in a peeled orange.

Poisoning Can Be Prevented

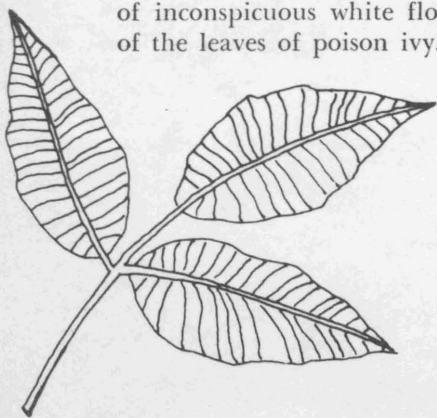
To prevent inflammation from poison ivy, use the following precautions:

1. Avoid contact with poison ivy plants.
2. Keep pets from running through poison ivy plants. The toxin transferred to their feet and fur can remain on the pets for several days and be transferred to humans.
3. Do not burn poison ivy plant parts.
4. Wash contaminated clothing thoroughly and separately before wearing again.
5. Wash the contaminated part of the body thoroughly with soap and water within 5 to 10 minutes after contact is made with poison ivy.
6. Several nonprescription lotions are available for treating skin inflammations caused by poison ivy. Some trade names for these lotions are Rhulispay, Rhulicream, IV-off and Calamine. Lotions can be applied frequently during the day to relieve itching and to soothe and dry the irritated area. See your doctor for treatment if irritation is not cleared up in 3 to 4 days.

Herbicides Can Control Poison Ivy

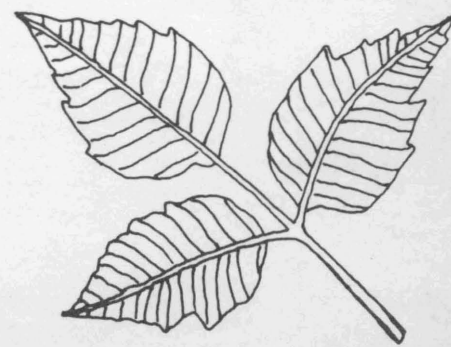
Poison ivy can be controlled by hand chopping, but an herbicide applied as a spray solution is more effective. Herbicides that produce the most effective control are ammonium sulfamate, AMS-"Am-mate"*; amino triazole; 2,4,5-T; silvex; and 2,4-D. All of these herbicides are absorbed through the leaves and stems.

Spring, summer and early fall applications produce the best plant kills after the leaves are fully developed and growing vigorously. Herbicides should be applied only when there is no danger of wind blowing the fine spray particles onto other



Lobed

Toothed



plants. Herbicides should be used carefully and applied as directed on the container label.

Ammate and amino triazole are the most effective of the herbicides listed above, but Ammate, in the form of yellow crystals that dissolve readily in water, may be the safest for overall use because of its reaction on plants.

Ammate, used with care and at recommended rates, will control all growth forms of poison ivy without danger to other plants or the soil although a large amount of the solution applied to the soil surface can cause soil sterilization. Nontoxic to animals and humans, Ammate can be used throughout the growing season to treat poison ivy.

Ammate can be purchased at most feed, seed and garden-supply stores. For use, 1 pound of Ammate crystals should be mixed in 1 gallon of water with 2 tablespoonfuls of household detergent for spraying the foliage of sprouts and seedlings of poison ivy. A knapsack hand sprayer or a sprinkler-watering can is satisfactory. The foliage should be wet thoroughly to obtain good control. Although poison ivy treated with Ammate solution will begin to turn brown within 24 hours following spraying, it takes several weeks to kill the plants completely. Usually, two or more treatments are needed at 6- to 8-week intervals to control all regrowth and kill all plants. The standing dead stems can be removed from the soil and destroyed.

Large poison ivy plants growing or climbing on shade trees can be controlled by cutting the stem near the groundline and covering the freshly cut surface with Ammate crystals. The tops of the old stems should be removed from the tree and destroyed.

Poison oak infestation on rangeland following brush clearing can be controlled by applying 2 pounds per acre of silvex or 2,4,5-T as ground or air broadcast. A retreatment the second year is necessary to control seedlings.

*Ammonium sulfamate, "Ammate," is registered as a nonfood-use herbicide at the rate of 100 pounds per 100 gallons of water as a broadcast treatment. If recommendations on the approved label are followed, excess residues should not be a problem. "Ammate" is a trade name and does not constitute a guarantee or recommendation of the product by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service and does not imply its approval to the exclusion of other products that also may be suitable.

Precautions Should Be Employed

When herbicides are used to control poison ivy, they should be applied with care, following the directions on the container label. The following precautions and information should also be observed:

- Ammate is corrosive to metal and wire fences.
- Metal containers should be washed thoroughly following spraying.
- Ammate is a contact killer on grass but safe to use around shrubbery if the solution is not sprayed on the foliage. Heavy applications of herbicides such as Ammate will kill lawn grasses and weeds and can cause minor soil sterilization. But herbicides used properly can be a most helpful tool to the agriculturist and the home owner in controlling unwanted vegetation.
- Ammate should be kept in an airtight, non-corrosive container.
- Ammate should be washed from skin with soap and water. Also, after treating poison ivy, clothing should be washed separately before wearing it again.
- The bark of shade trees should not be broken when poison ivy plants are treated.

Suggestions for herbicide use are based upon the following: effectiveness of materials; avoiding residues in excess of allowable tolerances; avoiding toxicity to economic plants, animals and humans; and avoiding detrimental side effects to the environment of the treated area. Rates for herbicide use in Texas usually are below rates on approved labels. However, the herbicide user is **always responsible** for the effects of residues on his own forage crop or livestock, as well as for problems caused by drift or movement of the herbicide from his property to other properties. Should questions arise concerning the current label status of any approved herbicide, contact your county Extension agent or the range specialists of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, The Texas A&M University System.

Reference: FB-1972, USDA, *Poison Ivy, Poison Oak and Poison Sumac, Identification, Precautions and Eradication.*

The information given herein is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by the Cooperative Extension Service is implied.

Educational programs conducted by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service serve people of all ages regardless of socio-economic levels, race, color, sex, religion or national origin.

Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, The Texas A&M University System and the United States Department of Agriculture cooperating. Distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8, 1914, as amended, and June 30, 1914.

20M-3-74

RM3-1